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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1074  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003096

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PINR](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: GOLKAR -- INDONESIA'S LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY  
PLOTS ITS PATH

REF: A. JAKARTA 3027  
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 2948  
[1](#)C. STATE 127315  
[1](#)D. JAKARTA 2021

JAKARTA 00003096 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia's largest political party--Golkar--will soon hold its leadership conference. The annual meeting will take place against the backdrop of the looming 2009 national elections. The party will use the meeting to discuss the possibility of a Kalla presidential bid. Though Kalla's influence in the party is robust, he is not in total control--old and new stars will try to influence the proceedings. Despite lacking any readily identifiable ideology beyond patronage and a vague form of nationalism/secularism, Golkar remains highly influential, and the annual meeting will go a long way towards bringing the 2009 elections into focus. END SUMMARY.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

[1](#)2. (C) Golkar will hold its annual leadership conference in Jakarta, November 22-25. The conference will involve hundreds of the party's key leaders and local officials. The focus will be on the 2009 elections. By all accounts, Vice President and Golkar Chair Jusuf Kalla's political future has become the 800-pound gorilla in the room (see Ref B). Even though the VP's fate may not be completely in the party's hands, Mission contacts report that Golkar will use the upcoming conference and subsequent meetings to devise a unified strategy for the 2009 presidential and legislative elections, something which is lacking now.

[1](#)3. (C) While most of Mission's Golkar contacts steadfastly maintain the VP could run a successful presidential campaign if he throws his hat into the ring, they also assert the most pragmatic approach for Golkar might be to target another five years with Kalla as the VP. Golkar operative Dadan Irawan told poloff that if the party does decide to go the latter route, Golkar will ask President Yudhoyono for as many as 10

cabinet positions in exchange for continued party support.

#### VP REINS IN FACTIONS

¶4. (C) Mission contacts report that VP Chair Kalla--who in the past has been assailed for lackluster management of Golkar--has recently asserted firm control over the factionalized party. Golkar still has at least four major factions--(1) Kalla's group, (2) Parliamentary Speaker Agung Laksono's loyalists, (3) Akbar Tandjung's troops, and (4) Advisory Board Chairman Surya Paloh's small band. The VP, however, has reportedly brought them to heel, at least for now. Contacts continue to report that the factions are divided on the basis of personality and not ideology.

¶5. (C) According to Dadan Irawan, Kalla won Laksono's loyalty by intervening in the aftermath of the January 2007 Adam Air crash near Sulawesi in which all were killed, thereby sparing Laksono (a founder of the airline) any real scrutiny of any possible role in Adam Air's poor safety record. Poempida reported that although Akbar still enjoyed support, he lacked the power to override Kalla's directives through his proxies. Surya Paloh, on the other hand, had damaged his reputation by orchestrating the high profile meetings between Golkar and PDI-P--the second largest party in the country (Ref D). According to Dadan Irawan, internal Golkar polling revealed the meetings with PDI-P hurt the party's popularity.

#### LURKING IN THE SHADOWS

¶6. (C) One long-time Golkar politician and faction head continues to draw attention. Akbar Tandjung, widely respected as one of the country's most skilled politicians, could ultimately trump Kalla's best laid plans. According to Laksono assistant Arief Budiman, Tandjung has worked

JAKARTA 00003096 002.2 OF 002

assiduously behind the scenes to position himself as a possible VP option for SBY. Budiman told poloff that if Tandjung succeeded in becoming the President's VP choice and then won, the fickle winds of Golkar political loyalty would quickly adjust back to their former leader (Tandjung was unceremoniously deposed as Golkar Chair in 2004.) According to Arief, Tandjung would easily re-gain control of Golkar in this scenario; Golkar is, after all, first and foremost a party of power and patronage.

#### RISING STARS?

¶7. (C) There are young Golkar politicians out there eager to make a mark. Golkar Parliamentarian Yuddy Chrisnandi--who is considered a rising star of sorts--has reportedly drawn the ire of some of his party colleagues, however. According to Poempida Hidayatulloh--another young Golkar up-and-comer--Yuddy had ignored the hierarchy in the party and angered party officials with his penchant for constant media showmanship. Dadan Irawan, on the other hand, told poloff that he viewed Chrisnandi as one of a number of "rising stars" in the party, though he confirmed that his media exploits may have antagonized some in Golkar.

#### GOOD TIMES FOR GOLKAR

¶8. (C) Of the many interesting political storylines to emerge since Suharto's fall in 1998, Golkar's continued relevance undoubtedly ranks as one of the most intriguing. Most observers assumed that after Suharto was toppled, Golkar would quickly crumble. The party, however, currently enjoys the most seats in the DPR, controls the vice presidency, and has once again emerged as a prohibitive early favorite to capture the most parliamentary seats in 2009. Despite lacking any easily identifiable core political ideology beyond patronage and a vague form of nationalism and secularism, Golkar still rules the roost, and this month's party meeting will go a long way towards bringing the 2009

presidential and legislative elections into greater focus.

HUME